

12-23-07 Alumna

With Newton Construction, there grows the neighborhood

■ Company renovating several houses near Cedar Heights school.

By PAT KINNEY
Courier Business Editor

CEDAR FALLS — Bruce Newton is finding places to put new homes in the heart of the Cedar Valley, one lot at a time.

Newton, of Newton Construction, reports he is finding some success renovating, redeveloping and building new on several lots around Cedar Heights Elementary School.

Over the past two years he has invested nearly \$1 million in renovation and building projects in lots along Rainbow and Hawthorne Drive near Cedar Heights school. He has also acquired an empty lot on nearby Neola Street for redevelopment.

"A small remodeler is all I am," said Newton, a 1987 graduate of Columbus High School who's been self-employed for 12 years. He has also tried his hand at new construction in

outlying areas and newer subdivisions of Waterloo and Cedar Falls and in rural areas.

Building in existing neighborhoods poses a challenge in determining what can be built on an existing lot given its size and configuration.

"I bought these properties on what you'd call a 'spontaneous buy.' I went in there to look for antiques and found the property was for sale and bought the whole thing," he said.

He has acquired the developable lots he knows of in the Cedar Heights area, but is looking for more.

"If we find them, we'll get them and buy them," he said. "You watch for a lot of these houses and they appear to be okay, but they're actually dilapidated. A lot of them are in pretty bad shape," and either need to be demolished or gutted and totally renovated.

Newton, who lives on Rainbow Drive in Waterloo, also wants to invest in an area he considers his neighborhood.

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Photos by RICK CHASE / Courier Staff Photographer



Bruce Newton is renovating, redeveloping and building homes on available lots in the Cedar Heights Elementary School neighborhood. One of Newton's nearly-finished products, on Hawthorne Drive in Cedar Falls, is shown at left.

NEWTON

'Infill' construction is rare in established neighborhoods
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His properties are drawing interest. His Hawthorne Drive project, two 2,400-square-foot side-by-side attached homes selling for \$225,000 each, has attracted a considerable amount of attention, and the Rainbow Drive properties moved quickly.

"I'm trying to hit the \$250,000, \$270,000 price range and less," he said. "What we're trying to do is stick in the \$120,000 range to \$250,000, \$270,000 range."

Before he embarked on those building projects, he expanded his own home on Rainbow in Waterloo.

Sam Runyan, past president of the Home Builders Association of Waterloo-Cedar Falls, said "infill" construction in existing neighborhoods is rare. "If you can find the lot with not that bad of

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Bruce Newton
Newton Construction

an idea," he said. "I think there's a market for something like that."

The proximity to the school, trails and parks are an attraction around Cedar Heights, Newton said. The neighborhood also is a selling point. Newton serves as a general contractor on his projects and employs local subcontractors.

He will be pursuing more such projects.

"This housing is going to blow up, I guarantee you. It's just going to expand, with the amount of commercial (construction) going on," Newton said, and a generally positive economy.

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